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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 4418
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2065
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 4399
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3494
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 8519
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 5964
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 0664
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2793
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000510

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: DISCUSSIONS ON NEXT STEPS AFTER EASTERN ELECTIONS

REF: A. COLOMBO 463

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 448

[1](#)C. IIR 6 816 0063 08

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James R. Moore for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassadors or Heads of Mission of the U.S., France, Norway, India, and U.K., and the Resident Representatives of the UN, World Bank and Asian Development Bank met on May 21 to discuss policy responses to the recent elections for the Provincial Council in the east. Most agreed that the elections, while far from perfect, were fairly typical for Sri Lanka and the region, and would likely be accepted by the people of the East. Ambassador agreed that since the international community did not send observers, it should be guided by the reactions of the communities in the east. Ambassador observed that Pillaiyan should be judged on the basis of his ability to work with the government to ensure security and development for all ethnic communities in the East, but cautioned that the international community can not acquiesce in the dual and contradictory role for Pillaiyan of Chief Minister and leader of an armed paramilitary. Ambassador met Defense Secretary Rajapaksa on May 23 to discuss the idea of regularizing the TMVP cadres into some sort of force paid by the Government. Rajapaksa confirmed the Government was moving ahead to create two battalions of TMVP cadres within the Army. Post believes it is too early to make a judgment about whether the people of the east accept the outcome of the recent elections. Little or no violence during and after the first meeting of the Eastern Provincial Council will be a good indicator that the population is willing to accept the election results, albeit with reservations. We and other missions believe the international community should be prepared at a minimum to proceed with plans that help the people of the East. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassadors or Heads of Mission of the U.S., France, Norway, India, and U.K., and the Resident Representatives of the UN, World Bank and Asian Development Bank met on May 21 to discuss policy responses to the recent elections for the Provincial Council in the east. UN Representative Buhne opened by noting that his many staff in

the region had reported considerable irregularities in the conduct of the election, particularly in the districts of Ampara and Batticaloa. However, the UN was not in a position to judge the scale of these abuses or whether they affected the final outcome.

13. (C) The Indian Deputy High Commissioner reported that the election was probably 50% fair, but that abuses had occurred on both sides and that this scale of abuse was consistent with past elections. He said that India believes that the population of the east is likely to accept the election outcome since they are accustomed to high levels of election abuse. He said that India therefore does not expect post-election violence. The French Ambassador agreed and said that based on his ten years experience in South Asia, these elections were fairly typical. He argued that the international community should accept the results if the people of the east are prepared to do so.

14. (C) Ambassador agreed that since the international community did not send observers, and since the opposition court challenge of the results could take one year or more, the international community should be guided by the reactions of the communities in the east. He cautioned however, that it is premature to judge now that no violence will occur. He suggested that all of us should wait for the first meeting of the Eastern Provincial Council (note: now postponed to June 4). If the Muslim and other provincial councilors attend that meeting and agree to support Chief Minister Pillaiyan, and the people of the east accept the arrangement, the

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international community should also be prepared to do so.

15. (C) Ambassador observed that Pillaiyan should be judged on the basis of his ability to work with the Government to ensure security, harmony between the ethnic communities and his commitment to ensure equal development and access to Government funds for all of the ethnic communities.

16. (C) The Indian Deputy High Commissioner agreed, noting that Pillaiyan faces a unique twin challenge of serving as the elected Chief Minister who is sworn to uphold the country's laws while also heading a paramilitary force that still has an estimated 2,000 cadres (note: this is considerably higher than the GSL estimate below). He said one major challenge will be how to support these cadres. Up to now they have relied on extortion, theft and other illegal activities to finance themselves. He observed that the Government will likely resist efforts to demobilize adult TMVP cadres because it needs them to continue to fight the LTTE in the east and prevent them from re-infiltrating back into the region.

17. (C) Ambassador suggested that the international community cannot acquiesce in the dual and contradictory role for Pillaiyan. He recommended that foreign Missions speak quietly to the Government to urge that if the Government needs TMVP cadres to fight the LTTE, the Government should form special battalions and pay them so the TMVP does not need to rely on illegal activities to finance itself. Participants agreed that this was a sensible course.

18. (C) Ambassador met Defense Secretary Rajapaksa on May 23 to discuss the idea of regularizing the TMVP cadres into some sort of force paid by the Government. Rajapaksa confirmed the Government was moving ahead to create two battalions of TMVP cadres within the Army. He estimated there were approximately 500 TMVP cadres, and noted that Karuna had previously told him that only about 200 to 300 were armed. (Note: In a short meeting earlier in the day with Army Commander Fonseka, Fonseka put the total number of cadres at closer to 700.) Rajapaksa said that Pillaiyan has agreed to "disarm" by giving control of his armed cadres to the Army Commander.

19. (C) COMMENT: As discussed in the meeting with other Ambassadors, Post believes it is too early to make a judgment about whether the people of the east accept the outcome of the Eastern elections. A major indicator will be reactions once the new Eastern Provincial Council meets for the first time, portfolios and responsibilities are assigned, and a work plan is agreed on. Little or no violence during and after that will be a good indicator that the population is willing to accept the election results, albeit with reservations, some of which will be decided in the courts. We and other missions believe the international community should be prepared at a minimum to proceed with plans that help the people of the East. The head of the Tamil National Alliance Sampanthan agreed with that judgment when we met him during the visit of DRL DAS Barks-Ruggles.

MOORE